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To our patients:

Recently Bayer Pharmaceuticals, the distributor for the Mirena IUD, increased the price of their product by more than several hundred dollars. Their justification for doing so was that the IUD was “undervalued” compared to oral contraceptives, since the IUD can be utilized for 5 years. However, most women do not use the IUD for the entire 5 years. Typically women will use the IUD for just over 3 years. The Mirena IUD now costs well over \$800. Although I feel the IUD is still a good value if used for the full 5 years, I am extremely upset that Bayer has decided to increase their price in the current healthcare environment. My feeling is that this has more to do with corporate greed than fairly pricing their product. There have been no significant changes in how the device has been manufactured for many years. It is unlikely that the cost of making the device has increased to justify such a huge increase in the price to the consumer

I previously stocked the Mirena IUD in my office as a convenience for my patients, but because of this change in price I can no longer afford to do so. Since Bayer understood that it would be prohibitive for most offices to stock their product, they strategically created a way for patients to obtain the IUD in offices where it is not routinely stocked. Unfortunately, the process to obtain the device is cumbersome for both patients and office staff. Nevertheless, the following is an explanation of the steps that need to be taken for our patients to obtain the Mirena IUD for contraception. Once the IUD comes into my office after this cumbersome process, we will happily place it for you as we always have.

Step 1:

Please call your insurance company FIRST to determine whether or not the Mirena IUD is a covered benefit. Ask your insurance company specifically if they cover the device and if they cover the insertion. These are two different things. If they say they cover the device ask them if they cover it in its entirety or whether or not you will have to pay a portion of the cost of the device. If they are confused about what device you are asking about, give them the “J” code for the Mirena: J7302.

Step 2:

If your insurance company covers the cost of the device please call us. If they do not cover the cost, either in part or in whole, please see the section below regarding other options. If they do cover the cost, we will fill out the new form given to us by Bayer to use for ordering the Mirena IUD. After we fill out our section of the form, we will mail it or fax it to you to sign and send in to CVS/Caremark (the designated specialty pharmacy of Bayer). CVS/Caremark will then work with your insurance company to finalize the authorization process. CVS/Caremark will then notify our office if your insurance company has given authorization for the IUD device. We will then have to call you to make sure you wish to proceed with the process, and only then will they send the device to our office. Once we receive the product, we will then call you to set up a time that would be convenient to you for the insertion of the IUD. After we insert the IUD, we will bill your insurance company for the office visit when the device is inserted.

It is unfortunate that this confusing process has been put upon you, our patient, and us by Bayer.

IF YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY DOES NOT COVER THE DEVICE AND YOU MUST PAY OUT OF POCKET, YOU CAN FOLLOW THE SAME PROCESS LISTED ABOVE AND PAY \$840, OR YOU CAN READ THE FOLLOWING AND PAY JUST OVER \$270.

If you find that your insurance company does not cover the cost of the device, and you will have to pay full price out-of-pocket, you do have options. You can go through the same process described above or you can choose to utilize an outside pharmacy and pay much less for the same product. **Keep in mind that you will not be able to use your insurance for this route. That should be okay, however, as the reason you are reading this is that your insurance won't cover the cost of the device anyway...**

The Mirena IUD comes into our country from its manufacturing origin in Finland. It comes in as an FDA approved medical device by BAYER, or a non-FDA approved medical device through Canadian pharmacies. I have many colleagues in the Walnut Creek area who utilize a specific Canadian pharmacy for purchasing Mirena IUDs for use with their patients. The Mirena IUDs purchased from this Canadian pharmacy are still manufactured at the same place as the FDA approved Mirena IUD, but because they are not FDA approved they are significantly less expensive. If you would like to use this pharmacy to obtain your Mirena IUD at a cost of \$270 instead of paying \$840 from CVS/Caremark, we would be happy to help you. When you purchase your Mirena IUD from Northwest pharmacy, they will send it directly to you and you can bring it into our office for placement at your convenience. We will provide you with a written prescription and would ask you to fax it to Northwest pharmacy to obtain the IUD. You will be required to set up an account with them for this service. It is very simple and straightforward, unlike the Bayer process.

I am very disappointed with the decision Bayer made to dramatically increase the price of their IUD. I love the Mirena IUD and still feel it is an excellent choice for contraception. That Bayer made the process of obtaining IUDs so cumbersome is disturbing, to the point where I am now looking for better alternatives for my patients. Obtaining the Mirena IUD through a Canadian pharmacy is a bit unorthodox but I am confident with the efficacy of the device. The Mirena IUDs manufactured in Finland that are FDA approved comes with a number on the box reflecting FDA approval. The Canadian Mirena IUDs do not have the FDA number. Although this may be concerning for some patients, these Mirena IUDs are clearly manufactured in the same location and are identical in every way. If you have concerns about having a non-FDA approved IUD, we will be happy to help you obtain the \$840 FDA approved Mirena IUD through the cumbersome process listed above through the CVS/Caremark specialty pharmacy. However if you must pay for the device and wish to have a less expensive option, obtaining it through Northwest pharmacy is an excellent alternative.

Should you have any questions regarding this process or any information reviewed in this document please do not hesitate to call my office and speak with one of my staff or myself. We will be happy to help you in this matter.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Wells M.D.